

REMARKS

In the Office Action, claims 1-18 were rejected. By the present response, claims 1-18 will be pending in the application. Reconsideration and allowance of all pending claims are requested.

Double Patenting Rejection

Applicants note that claims 1-18 have been provisionally rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting over claims 1-20 of copending Application No. 10/449,975. However, because the copending application has not been allowed, Applicants will respond to a provisional double patenting rejection following final disposition of one or both applications.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-18 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 (b) as being anticipated by Countrywood et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,110,540 A, hereinafter, "Countrywood"). Of these, claims 1, 9 and 15 are independent.

The Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner's recharacterization of the element "gas supply".

In the Office Action, the Examiner cited the element designated "98" in FIG. 3B of Countrywood to be equivalent to the "gas supply", the inlet line of which is recited in the claims. This is not a reasonable interpretation of Countrywood.

Claim 1 of the application specifically recites a "heated gas inlet line for delivering a gas to a powered electrode" and "a coupling device located between the powered electrode and the gas inlet line". The element designated by reference numeral 98 in FIG. 3B of Countrywood is a direct current arc system that acts as a counter-electrode. As mentioned in col. 7, lines 19-22:

Element 108 is connected to the alternating current power supply 18 of FIG. 1 so that the direct current arc system 98 acts as a counter-electrode.

Further, col. 7, lines 15-16 of Countrywood, on the other hand, says that “[g]as is supplied by noble gas supply 120”.

Hence, the “counter electrode” in Countrywood designated by reference numeral 98 clearly cannot be an equivalent to the gas supply or gas delivery inlet line recited in the claims.

Independent claims 1, 9 and 15 cannot be anticipated by Countrywood.

Countrywood fails to teach a heated gas supply line.

All of the independent claims recite, in generally similar language, two elements. A first element is a *heated gas supply line* that supplies a gas to a powered electrode. Claim 1 specifically recites a heated gas inlet line for delivering a gas to a powered electrode. Similarly, claims 9 and 15 recite a heated gas inlet line.

Countrywood does not teach or even suggest a *heated* gas supply. Passages dealing with the supply of gas include the following:

The gas for the process plasma between the drum electrode 20 and the counter-electrode 12 is supplied by gas supply 22.

Countrywood, col. 4, lines 45-47;

* * *

In a preferred embodiment, the gas flowing from supply 22 includes a volatilized organosilicon compound, oxygen and an inert gas such as helium or argon.

Countrywood, col. 4, lines 61-63; and

* * *

A purge gas is supplied by gas supply 34. The gas of the purge gas from gas supply 34 is preferably an inert gas, such as helium, neon or argon, or a mixture thereof.

Countrywood, col. 5, lines 47-50.

Hence, Countrywood *does not* teach a *heated* gas supply for delivering a gas to a powered electrode.

Countrywood fails to teach the recited coupling device.

The independent claims also recite a *coupling device that isolates* the powered electrode from the gas supply line. In particular, claim 1 recites a coupling device located between the powered electrode and the gas inlet line, the coupling device comprising insulation portion. Claims 9 and 15 similarly recite a coupling device comprising insulation between the powered electrode and the gas inlet line.

Countrywood does not teach a coupling device comprising insulation between a powered electrode and a gas inlet line. On the contrary, Countrywood teaches an electrode that does not have an insulation coating. Rather, Countrywood states that:

A second (counter-electrode) plasma is preferably produced from gases, such as inert gases, that do not form a dielectric coating on the counter-electrode. Since no dielectric coating is formed on the counter-electrode, there is no drift in the process.

Countrywood, col. 5, lines 27-30;

This system also uses a gas supply 48 which supplies the gases that prevent the formation of a dielectric layer on the metal material 46.

Countrywood, col. 6, lines 55-57; and

Both of these gas purged electrodes are supplied with a gas which does not form a dielectric layer on the gas purged electrode and counter-electrode.

Countrywood, col. 7, lines 45-47.

Clearly, Countrywood does not teach or even suggest an insulation portion between a powered electrode and a gas inlet line.

Applicants therefore submit that Countrywood cannot anticipate claims 1, 9 or 15, or the claims depending therefrom.

Conclusion

In view of the remarks and amendments set forth above, Applicants respectfully request allowance of the pending claims. If the Examiner believes that a telephonic interview will help speed this application toward issuance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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